

For Immediate Release

November 12, 2014

Contact

Jen Rae Wang, Gov.'s Ofc., 402-429-4701

Charles Isom, Gov.'s Ofc., 402-471-1970

Russ Reno, DHHS, 402-471-8287

Editor's Note: Photos will be available for media use at the Governor's website: www.governor.nebraska.gov

Gov. Heineman Encourages Adoption of Nebraska's Foster Children; Proclaims November as Adoption Awareness Month

Lincoln—Today, Gov. Dave Heineman asked Nebraskans to consider adopting children under care of the state so they have a better chance to grow up as healthy, functioning and productive members of society. A local Lincoln family highlighted foster parenting to adoption as great way to grow their beautiful family.

Governor Heineman proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month in Nebraska to spotlight the urgent need for adoptive families for children in foster care waiting for permanent, loving families.

"In Nebraska, we have 322 children who are available for adoption at this time," Gov. Heineman said. "A brighter future is one of the greatest and most generous gifts that one person can give another. These children deserve that opportunity."

While most Nebraskans are fortunate to grow up in loving and nurturing families, too many children enter foster care through no fault of their own as victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment.

"They deserve the chance at the kind of life we've enjoyed by living with parents who care and provide a safe environment," Gov. Heineman said. "That's why we look to Nebraska families to step up, open their hearts and their homes, and provide the love and guidance that will put these youth on a more positive path in life."

Thomas Pristow, Director of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), said that at the end of October, 326 children have been adopted in the state this year. During National Adoption Month observances in courtrooms across the state in November, another 122 foster children will be adopted. (See the [list of community activities](#) in Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Grand Island, Kearney, Norfolk, North Platte and Scottsbluff.)

"While we celebrate nearly 450 adoptions so far this year, we must remember that 322 children are still waiting to be adopted," Director Pristow said. "During November we would encourage everyone who is or has considered becoming a foster parent to go to the DHHS website and look at the photos of the youth available for adoption. I hope you will be moved to action."

Of the children available for adoption, 73 are on the website. He said that beside photos, the site includes a short description of the children; 42 boys and 31 girls, available at www.dhhs.ne.gov/adoption. Persons considering adoption also may call 1-800-7PARENT (1-800-772-7368).

Governor Heineman also thanked the families who have adopted foster children and gave of themselves to help and provide unconditional love that will propel them the rest of their lives.

"Foster parents are doing a very good job for us, and we thank you for giving of yourself," Gov. Heineman said.

Andrea Walter, with her husband Adam, adopted three children in 2012 and will adopt another in Adoption Day ceremonies on Nov. 15 in Lincoln, said adopting the children felt natural and how it was meant to be.

"People comment that our children are so lucky to have us as parents, but we tell them we are the lucky ones," she said. "As soon as we met them, we immediately thought they were the ones for us."

While the Walters initially wanted to adopt only one or two children, they knew they couldn't break up the family and agreed to adopt all three.

"It's heartbreaking for the children to be separated from their biological parents, and maintaining that family connection with their siblings is very important. They go through a lot together, including adoption, so it's important that they be together to support each other."

Today, the children are eight, seven and six years old, and the soon-to-be latest addition to the family is three years old; two boys and two girls.

"They are cute and funny, and it's incredibly rewarding" Andrea said. "All kids need a good home. We found that we're capable of handling more than we thought."

That included the addition of the 16-year-old brother of the youngest child who moved into their home three weeks ago.

"Everything is going so well," she said. "Sometimes I worry that it's too good to be true. I know there will be tough situations, but I also know that we are changing the course of their lives forever. We encourage anyone to look into adoption of children in foster care."